

Creating Change Leaders

who support their teams in a world that won't slow down



Paul Devoy

We live in a VUCA world



Volatility

Change is fast, frequent and unpredictable in scale.



Uncertainty

The past is a poor guide to what happens next.



Complexity

Many interconnected parts; cause and effect are hard to trace.



Ambiguity

Situations can be read in more than one way.

The perfect storm



Geopolitics



Cost of living



Climate change



Demographics



Rapid technology change



Debt crisis

“The pace of change has never been this fast, yet it will never be this slow again.”

Pressures on leaders



AI and accelerating technology

Capability is compounding faster than organisations can absorb it.



Employee wellbeing

Stress and burnout are now board-level risks, not HR footnotes.



Five generations in the workplace

Traditionalists to Gen Z, each with different expectations of work and leaders.



Performance and productivity

Do more with less, while keeping people engaged and well.

Pressures on employees



Job insecurity

Restructures, automation and thin margins make every role feel provisional.



Work/life balance

Boundaries have blurred; the tilt is towards work.



Navigating a changing world

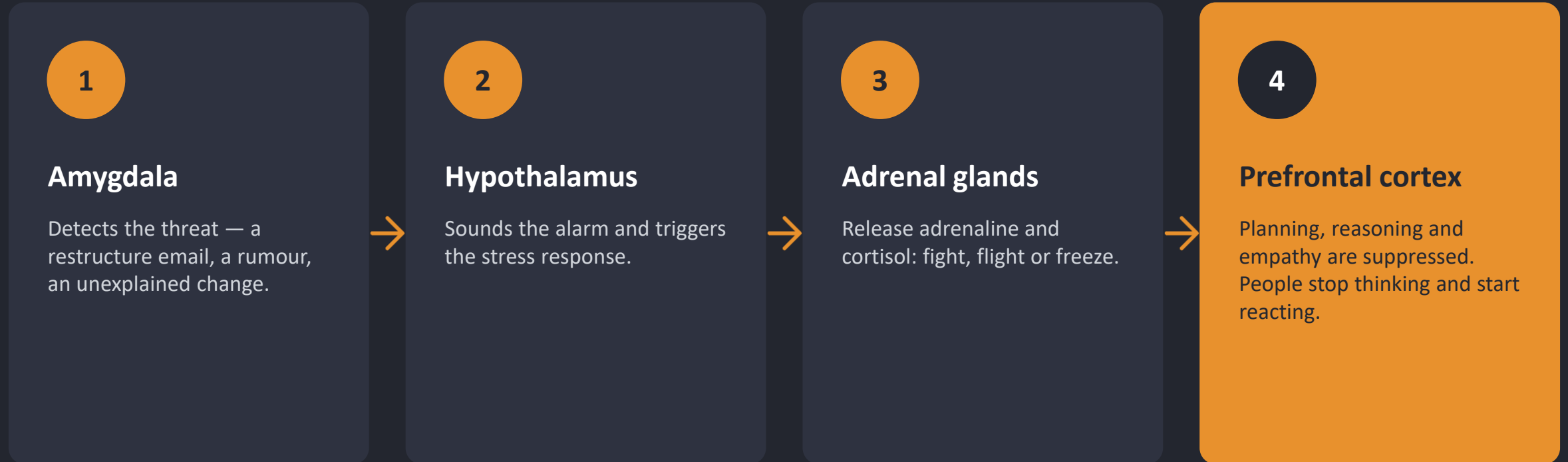
Constant adjustment with little time to settle.



Cost of living

Pay is not keeping pace with essentials for many households.

What stress does to the brain



Under threat, the thinking brain goes offline. Change lands on the reacting brain.

The manager in the middle



The reluctant manager problem

Fewer people want to be managers

18%

of non-managers see management as aspirational

52%

of workers do not see management as an attractive career path

Why management is breaking

82%

of managers received no training before promotion — the 'accidental manager'

74%

describe middle management as stressful

51%

see it as high stress, low reward

Six ways to create supportive managers

1

Invest in manager training

2

Create communities around management

3

Show that management is valued

4

Prioritise 'soft' skills

5

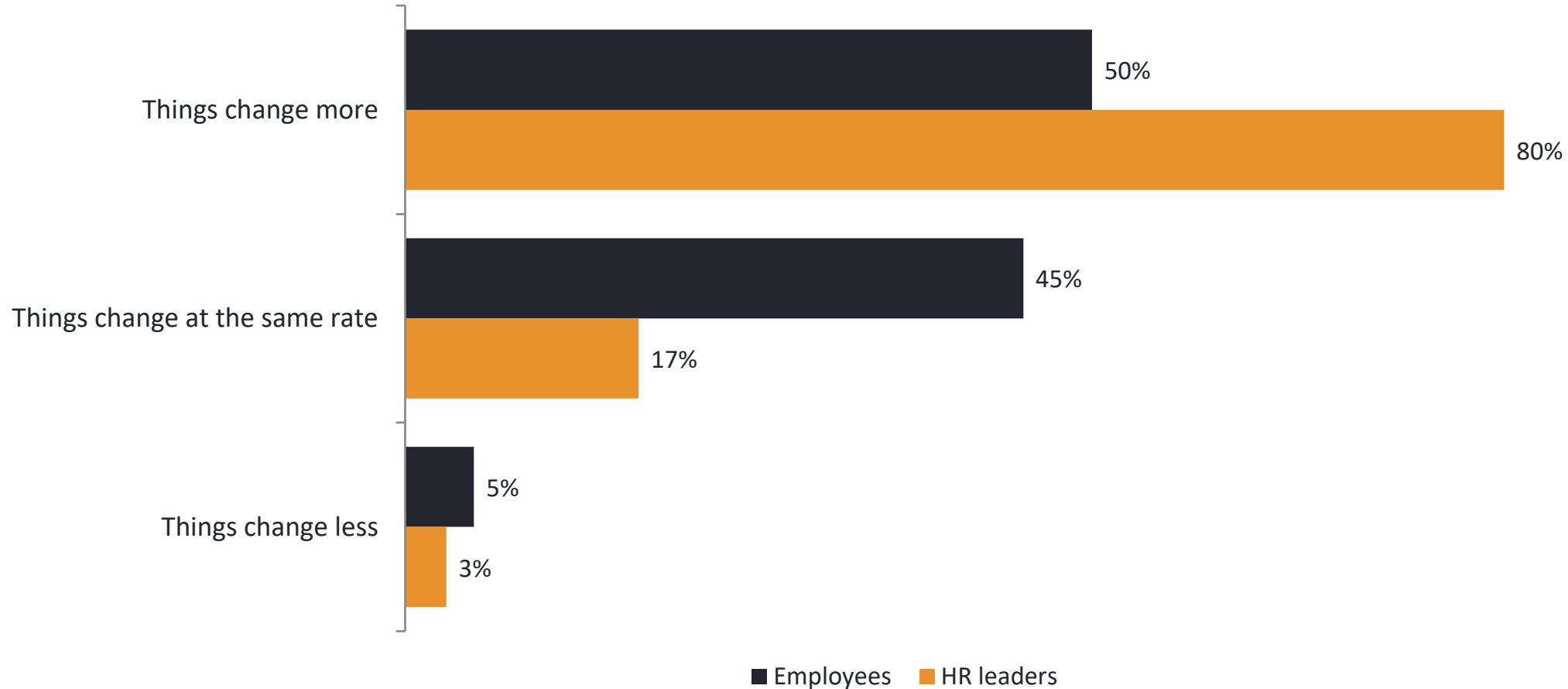
Don't neglect manager wellbeing

6

Define career paths

HR and employees see the pace of change differently

“Thinking about this year compared to the last three years, how often do things change at work?”



What happens when change is announced

28%

of employees feel less motivated

35%

say they can cope, but it's getting tiring

39%

felt more stressed at work because of change programmes

What happens when change is announced

1 in 4

considered leaving their role

1 in 5

feel worn down by the amount of organisational change

10–14%

feel energised and ready for change

Who feels involved in change?

57%

of entry-level staff do not feel involved in change

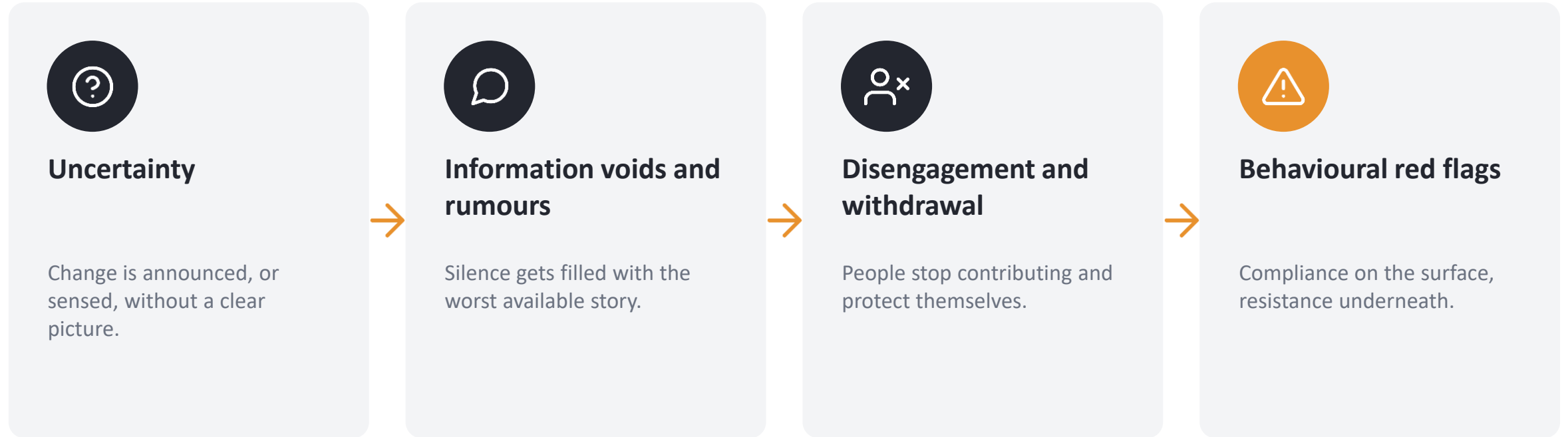
47%

of intermediate-level staff do not feel involved in change

66%

feel even somewhat involved — across all levels

From uncertainty to passive-aggressive compliance



...and the loop restarts with the next announcement, unless someone breaks it.

Keeping people in the thinking brain during change



**Clear and honest
communication**

1



**Understanding the 'why'
behind change**

2



**More time to adjust and
learn**

3



**Opportunities to be
involved and asked for
input**

4



**Support from their
manager**

5



**Peer support and a
sense of community**

6

Six recommendations for successful transformation

1

Get a bird's-eye view of change

2

Define the 'why'

3

Leaders must ensure clear, transparent communication

4

Don't neglect junior staff

5

Focus on middle manager support

6

Leaders should co-create wherever possible

Further reading



The Coming Wave

Mustafa Suleyman

AI, power and the 21st century's greatest dilemma



How Countries Go Broke

Ray Dalio

The big cycle of debt and economic change



Antifragile

Nassim Nicholas Taleb

Things that gain from disorder



Fierce Conversations

Susan Scott

Achieving success one conversation at a time

Change works when...

**People are moved
back into the
thinking brain**

**Managers are
supported**

**Uncertainty is
reduced**

**Communication is
clear**



Thank you

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Research cited: Investors in People, The Broken Ladder and Finding the Frequency (2025).